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For the Belfast Monthly Magazine

TRANSLATION OF SOME OF THE CHORUSES OF ARISTOPHANES.

FROM THE COMEDY OF THE CLOUDS.

"The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heav'n to earth, from earth
to heav'n,
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unseen—the poet's pen,
Turns them to shape, and gives to airy nothing,
A local habitation, and a name."

THE Comedy of "the Clouds," was first acted under the Archon Isarchus, in the ninth year of the Peloponessian war (the first of the 89th Olympiad) at the Dionysial feasts. Its object was to hold up Socrates, who stood accused of introducing strange Gods, to public ridicule. The translator, struck with the harmony of the original, attempted to express in English, what he had admired in the Greek. No English version of these Choruses (so far as comes within his knowledge) has yet appeared. In the first, Socrates addresses Strepsiadēs (in debt) informing him of his erroneous opinions with respect to the Deities. He enforces the devotion due to Ether and the Clouds, and invokes them to become visible. On the close of this address, the Deities are personified, and one of the Clouds exhorts the sister Divinities, to attend to the prayer of Socrates. The third is a response, by another of the Clouds, in reply. The fourth introduces the Chorus, ascertaining the relative devotion due to each of the supreme powers. And the fifth, which closes the piece, supplicates their protection.

I.

CALM as that arch o'er nature spread,
When midnight's starry radiance glows,
When sleep the winds on Ocean's bed,
And earth and heaven at once repose,
Should be the time-worn man of age,
When choral hymns to heaven we raise,
When sacred rites the soul engage,
And solemn swells the voice of praise.
Thou Power supreme! earth circling air,
Through fields of light in motion driven,
Propitious hear thy suppliant's prayer,
And bear it to the gates of heaven.
Hail splendid Ether! ever bright,
With thee the air-borne clouds reside,
Or tread thy courts in radiant light,
Or sweep the earth in thundering pride.
Ye sacred daughters of the air,
Children of light and maids of power,
Accepted be the votive prayer,
And bless'd the solemn festal hour.

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Whether Olympus' heights you sweep,
Or with the sea-nymphs, hand in hand,
Ye tread the mazes of the deep,
And mingle in the choral band:

Whether in soft and graceful ease,
A while you cease from pleasing toil,
Or sweep in pride the billowy seas,
Or bear aloft the waves of Nile:

Or by Mæotis' banks reclin'd,
On roseate beds you love to lie,
Your tresses floating unconfin'd,
Light-varying in the rain-bow die.

Then, when our sacrifice delights,
When swells the hymn through fields of air,
When pleasing rise our genial rites,
Deign nymphs divine, these rites to share.

II.

SISTERS—Daughters of the air,
As late on Ether's wing ye past,
Say, heard you not the voice of prayer,
Slow moving on the western blast?

Come, let us rise from Ocean's bed,
These splendid robes of light unfurl'd,
Shall sweep the cloud-capt mountain's head,
And shed a radiance on the world.

Come, mark the prospect stretching wide,
The fruits of earth at distance scan,
Or from Olympus' summit glide,
And trace the sacred seat of man.

No strangers we to human kind;
Confest through nature shines our power,
'Tis ours to give the hoary rind,
Or bathe in dew the vernal flower.

Resplendent flames the Delian light,
Our parent source, the God of day;
And backwards rush the shades of night,
As on he moves the pathless way.

Come, mark the prospect stretching wide,
The fruits of earth at distance scan,
Or from Olympus' summit glide,
And trace the sacred seat of man.

III.

VIRGINS! bearers of the rain,
Sea-born Sisters of the main,
On airy wing through Ether mov'd,
Approach the shrine by Pallas lov'd,
Where form'd of erst the martial band,
That press'd the plains of Cecrop's land.
The choral hymn of praise invites,
The mystic fane—th' unspoken rites.
There rites divine, and vows are paid,
To Athens' guard, the blue-eyed maid;
Still in the temple's massy dome,
Can heaven's tenant find a home;
There festal rites their cares employ,
The choral hymn, their boast, their joy,
There crown'd with flowers those rites
appear,

Each season of the circling year,
When spring her genial influence yields,
And decks in dew-clad robes the fields:

F

The festal dance each soul delights,
And pleasing swell the Bromian rites,
Then glows the breast with living fire,
Then lightly sweeps the choral lyre,
The flute deep-breathing joins the sound,
And air-borne music floats around.

IV.

WHEN issuing from our hallow'd fanes,
Ascending swells the voice of song,
When choral hymns and mystic strains,
Religion's sacred rights prolong :
Then first we hail the name of Jove,
Whose power nor man, nor God with-
stands,
Self-poss'd he shakes the realms above,
Or hangs the earth on airy bands.

Then Neptune, ruler of the main,
Whose circling arms round nature hurl'd
Binds in a massy rock-wove chain,
The solid fabric of the world.

To Ether next ascends the prayer,
His are the joys from health that flow,
To Ether, sovereign prince of air,
Who bids the breast with rapture glow :

And sacred hymn, and mystic song,
Proclaim the solemn festal hour,
When borne on passing winds along,
Our rites appease the Loxian power.

Beneath his car with lightning's speed,
High-prancing to the signal-sound,

Light bounding flies the generous steed,
And thunders on Olympian ground.
Through heaven's high portals, ever bright,
Untir'd he moves in mystic plan,
And pours the fluid beam of light,
Rever'd by gods, ador'd by man.

V.

WHERE Cynthia's rose-clad summits
swell,
There sacred Phœbus loves to dwell,
There may our votive incense find,
The friend of Gods, and human kind.
And thou chaste Dian, power divine,
Dread goddess of the Ephesian shrine,
To thee, light swells from sacred shades,
The festal hymns of Lydian maids,
When air-borne forms adorn the groves,
Of Athens, land of many loves.
Minerva first of powers above,
Thou shaker of the shield of Jove,
We hail in choral circling band,
The goddess of our natal land ;
And Bacchus next the strain employs,
The God of mimic sportive joys,
Whose filmy veil, and magic power,
Can hide the pang of sorrow's hour,
With light-form'd hopes the mind beguile,
And plant on miseries' cheek a smile.
Now solemn swells the voice of praise,
To where Parnassian torches blaze,
Ascending to th' aerial land,
The sacred guards of Athens' land.
Dublin. WALSINGHAM.

LITERATURE, ANCIENT AND MODERN

OBSERVATIONS ON ROMANCE, FROM
THE FRENCH OF LA HARPE

GOOD romances are the history
of the human heart; but they
did not assume this character on their
first appearance among us. The most
ancient, such as "The Romance of
the Rose," may not have been use-
less for the improvement of our lan-
guage at a time when it was not
thought worthy of being employed in
the composition of serious writings.
I freely confess, I have never been
able to read either that or "Astrea,"
notwithstanding the latter is much more
modern, and was very much admired
at the beginning of the last century.
Some traits of simplicity, some pas-
toral images which may have been
pleasing at a time when we were unpro-
vided with better models, cannot make
amends for verbosity and bom-

bast, unless among professed philolo-
gists, men of reading and etymolo-
gists, who take delight in penetrating
into the dark antiquities of our lan-
guage, to explore its ancient jargon,
and who think their patience suffi-
ciently rewarded when they have been
able to discover some roots of mo-
dern words, or to quote some happy
phrase. Every body takes the nou-
rishment he likes best: we even see
this antiquated idiom introduced into
modern productions, and writers
of the eighteenth century imitating
the language which was spoken in the
twelfth. In the romances of the pre-
sent day, the style of "The Fair
Maguelon" and of "Pierre de Pro-
vence" is used. Some people discover
wonderful invention in this species of
imitation; as for me, who am unac-
quainted with such refinement, I can